

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Previously Canceled)
2. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 17, wherein the sheets are deformed before the fastener is set.
3. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein the sheets are clamped together until the fastener has been set.
4. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 3, wherein the sheets are clamped together until the fastener has been set.
5. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein the sheets are unclamped before the fastener is set.
6. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 3, 4 or 5 wherein the sheets are clamped together between a clamping member and the die, the sheets being deformed between the clamping member and the die.
7. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 2 wherein the sheets are deformed by a head portion of the fastener.
8. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 17, wherein the sheets are deformed after the fastener is set.

9. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 8, wherein the sheets to be deformed are clamped between a clamping member and the die, the sheets being deformed between the clamping member and the die.

10. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 17, wherein the sheets are deformed and the fastener is set simultaneously.

11. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 10, wherein the sheets are deformed by a head portion of the fastener driving the sheets into the recess when the fastener is set.

12. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 11, wherein the sheets are clamped against a surface of the die outside the recess during the setting of the fastener.

13. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 11 or 12, wherein the fastener head has a periphery, the fastener head increases in thickness toward the periphery so as to define a convex surface facing the recess formed in the die.

14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A ~~rivet for use in accordance with the~~ method of according to claim 17, wherein the fastener is a rivet comprising a head, the thickness of which increases continually in a radially outwards direction to define a convex surface beneath the head.

16. (Cancel)

17. (Previously Amended) A method for joining together two or more superimposed generally planar sheets using a fastener having a shank and a fastener setting and sheet deforming assembly comprising a die with a cavity and an annular recess immediately adjacent to said cavity, comprising the steps of:

placing the superimposed planar sheets in the fastener setting and sheet deforming assembly, one or more planes defined by interfaces between the superimposed planar sheets; and

operating the assembly to set the fastener into engagement with the sheets such that the shank of the fastener is upset in said die cavity without penetration of the lowermost sheet of the superimposed generally planar sheets, and to deform all the sheets out of the one or more interface planes into the annular recess of the die.

18. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 3 wherein the sheets are deformed by a head portion of the fastener.

19. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 4 wherein the sheets are deformed by a head portion of the fastener.

20. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 5 wherein the sheets are deformed by a head portion of the fastener.

21. (Previously presented) A method according to claim 6 wherein the sheets are deformed by a head portion of the fastener.

22. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for joining together two or more superimposed generally planar sheets with a fastener having a shank, the apparatus comprising:

a fastener setting and sheet deforming assembly comprising a die,
a cavity in said die and
an annular recess immediately adjacent to said cavity,
the apparatus being operative to receive the sheets, to set said ~~fasteners~~ fastener into engagement with the sheets such that the shank of the fastener is upset in said die cavity without penetration of at least the lowermost sheet of the superimposed planar sheets and to deform all the sheets out of one or more planes defined by interfaces between the superimposed sheets into the annular recess of the die.